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## The Soviets' Dirty-Tricks Squad

The Russian word is *dezinformatsiya*, and a KGB manual defines it as "misleading the adversary." In fact, as currently practiced by the KGB, disinformation is far more—encompassing any forged document, planted news article or whispered rumor designed to discredit its enemies, especially the United States. Directed by "Service A" of the KGB's First Chief Directorate, disinformation is a key weapon in Moscow's running war of words with Washington. According to CIA estimates, the KGB's dirty-tricks squad commands 50 full-time agents and a budget of \$50 million a year. But that is only a small part of a \$3 billion propaganda apparatus that employs every conceivable Soviet "asset"—from Leonid Brezhnev and Tass to shadowy front organizations around the world.

Much of Moscow's anti-American propaganda is overt. Statements by Brezhnev decrying U.S. weapons policies, for example, can be judged by their source and swiftly denied. But disinformation is more subtle and difficult to combat. In 1979 Soviet diplomats spread rumors that the United States had orchestrated the seizure of the Grand Mosque in Mecca and that the Pakistani Army had engineered the burning of the U.S.

Embassy in Islamabad. The goals: to stir anti-Americanism in Islam, and to sow tension between the Carter Administration and Pakistani President Mohammad Zia ul-Haq. Other disinformation is spread by Soviet-controlled radio stations in Third World countries. During the Iranian revolution, the "National Voice of Iran" (actually broadcasting from the U.S.S.R.) blanketed Iran with charges that the CIA had assassinated Iranian religious leaders and was plotting to kill Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini.

**Smear:** A favorite disinformation ploy is to plant "news" items in foreign publications, then repeat the charges in the Soviet press. A classic case involved veteran U.S. foreign-service officer George Griffin. Assigned to the U.S. Embassy in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) in the 1960s, Griffin was first identified—falsely—as a CIA agent by *Blitz*, a leftist Bombay weekly. In 1968 his name appeared in "Who's Who in the CIA," a bogus directory of American agents. More recently, an Indian news service accused him of organizing Afghan freedom fighters and even attempting to sabotage Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's plane—charges Tass and *Pravda* trumpeted worldwide. Last June a Soviet newspaper printed a



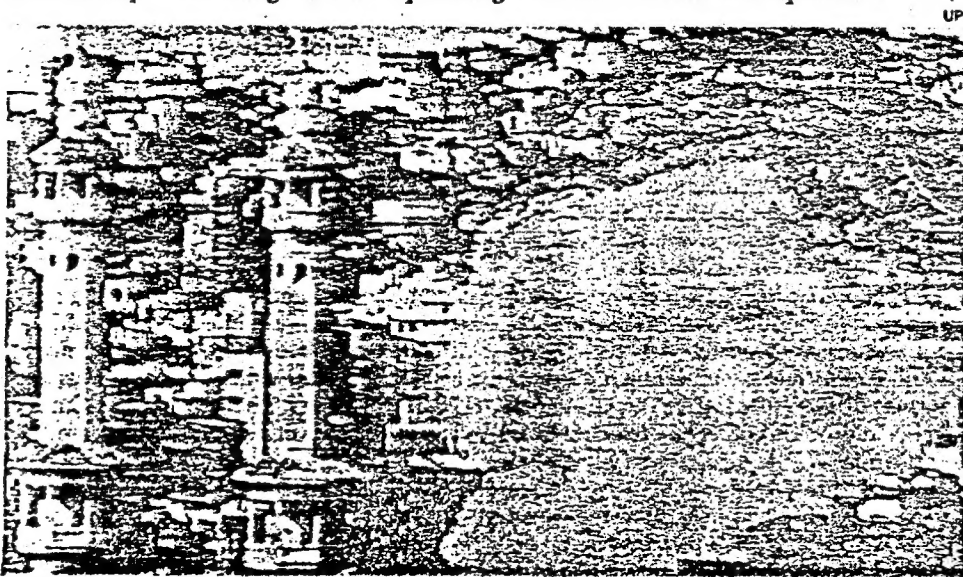
Ortiz: In Peru, the KGB said he was CIA

letter allegedly from Griffin threatening an Indian journalist. Despite repeated U.S. denials, the smear campaign succeeded. In July, Gandhi let it be known that Griffin's scheduled posting to the U.S. Embassy in New Delhi would be "too contentious," and his assignment was quietly withdrawn.

Why the long campaign to get Griffin? U.S. intelligence officials cannot answer the question with certainty, but the attacks may have been triggered during Griffin's days in Ceylon when he tried—in vain—to persuade a Soviet couple to defect. Soviet propagandists have started a similar campaign to discredit two new U.S. ambassadors—Harry Barnes in India and Frank Ortiz in Peru. Charges that Ortiz is a CIA agent first appeared in a leftist Peruvian newspaper and almost immediately were repeated in *Izvestia*.

Forgeries, such as the letter purportedly written by Griffin, play a key role in disinformation, often providing the "evidence" for spurious charges. Skilled at duplicating typefaces and watermarks, the KGB produces four or five major forgeries of official U.S. documents a year, according to the CIA. One of the most famous is a "top secret" 1970 U.S. Army field manual, bearing the forged signature of Gen. William Westmoreland, that orders U.S. troops abroad to provoke leftist groups into terror-

Mecca mosque under siege in 1979: Spreading tales that America was responsible



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